

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**  
- **FINAL**  
- **April 8, 2009, 7:30 p.m.**  
- **Chenery Middle School Community Room**

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- Present: Chair Curtis; Members Allison, Brusch, Callanan, Epstein, Hofmann, Libensen, Lynch, McLaughlin, Millane, Paolillo, Smith, Widmer; BOS Chair Leclerc, School Committee Member Walker

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- Town Administrator Younger, Assistant Town Administrator Conti, Town Accountant Hagg. Town Treasurer Carman

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- Members Absent: Heigham

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- The meeting was called to order at 7:33 pm by Chair Curtis.

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- Chair Curtis began the meeting by inviting the members of Light Board to join the WC table for their presentation.

- ***Belmont Municipal Light Department (BMLD)***

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- Mr. Tim Richardson, BMLD Manager, presented on addressing the fact that Belmont's load growth has created a need to increase the capacity of the BMLD system. Economic analysis shows that the installation of a 115kV transmission service using underground transmission cables is the best overall option. The existing systems would be consolidated into one larger system. The Municipal Light Advisory Board supports this option. Mr. Richardson said he would like the WC's support to bring this to TM, perhaps in the fall.

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- Member Epstein said that this is a cost-effective proposal. The 115kV aids the town in avoiding a \$1M payment per year to NStar. The potential land sites would be benefited by this system being built. Member Allison noted that, in both size and scope this is a big project (between \$27M and \$37M) and the residents of Belmont will pay for this as rate payers. She asked about the potential for increased demand growth given the low economic growth and the fact that the developer for the retirement community on McLean property had notified the depositors of their inability to launch the project. Allison also asked how the borrowing rate would be 4%, since that was below the rate at which we believed we would be able to bond Wellington? Mr. Richardson said the demand has increased over 50% in 10 years. He spoke about high usage during peak times, e.g., air conditioning usage during a heat wave. Even if the demand growth is 1%, he said, we are at the demand capacity right now. We need to plan for this and, he added, there is the potential month savings for rate payers (\$3 per month).

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- Ms. Joyce Wood spoke to the interest rate question, noting that 4% has been the average. Member Allison and Ms. Wood discussed the present value of the project and the function of the discount rate. Member Epstein added that it is reasonable to believe that the present system will be maxed out in 3-5 years. The time frame to complete this project will be about 4 years. If there is a delay, there would be a period of real failure to serve customers.

- Chair Curtis said that conserving energy should be explored, and Member McLaughlin noted that peak demand makes energy expensive. Electric cars will increase demand and we have to start dealing with that issue now. Mr. Richardson replied that peak demand rates and conservation efforts won't shave 5-10% of the load off. Member Brusch asked about the \$1M in savings – when does it begin? Mr. Richardson replied that once the equipment is installed, the BMLD can cut off NStar and begin to see savings – probably within 2-3 years. Member Allison said that taxpayers will need to know what this project will mean for their rates year by year. Mr. Palmer replied that doing nothing costs rate payers \$13M – and the lights may go off. If they go with the 115kV, the cost is \$10M. If this is not successful, it will cost \$26M.

- Member Epstein: It comes down to spending \$28M vs. \$40M. Chair Curtis noted that the site issue is a “moving piece.” He requested that the BMLB let the WC know when they expect to be ready to go to TM. The WC thanked the BMLB for its presentation.

### ***Discussion of FY10 Impact Statement, Town Departments***

- Chair Curtis noted that questions have been raised about the feasibility of savings achieved by Town Administrator Younger regarding the projected savings of \$44K by eliminating snow removal on private ways. Mr. Younger said plowing private ways is back in the budget and that money from insurance savings will cover the \$44K. He added that the town has never accepted the statute, allowing it to plow private ways. Mr. Younger also noted that ambulance service will stay in service 100% of time, unless, he added, two fire fighters are down. We released two interns including one in the already small staffed accounting office. Younger added that he would restore the intern to accounting if possible. Member Widmer cautioned against budget restorations: the House budget will cut more deeply in FY11 and the potential money from the 1% meals/hotel tax will not be there. The House budget is still \$1 billion too high; things will only get worse. Widmer said he is not sure how the House budget will intersect with \$1.4M stimulus funding, but that a broad-based tax increase could be in the works.

- SC Member Walker asked Town Administrator Younger about the \$114K in police – where does school contribution fit? Member Brusch noted that the school budget carried their half of that position in FY09. Town Accountant Hagg noted that a full crossing guard was cut.

- The WC then discussed looking at the impact of the budget cuts and balancing those against the “core services” conversation.

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- ***Discussion of April Town Meeting Budget Presentation***

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- Chair Curtis will present to TM a budget overview which will clearly outline (using PowerPoint) what the available-revenue budget means for the town and contrasting that with a level-service budget. The implications will be spelled out, said Curtis. He will also then present some override scenarios. Member McLaughlin added that the “moving pieces” will need to be identified and explained: free cash, local cuts, stimulus, override, etc. Curtis agreed.

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- Member Paolillo pointed to the issue of determining what gets restored from what level of override. The BOS and the WC have to stand up to the cuts, noted BOS Chair Leclerc. Chair Curtis agreed and added that he wants to hear what TM members are willing to sacrifice. Member Allison suggested providing TM more than one year’s revenue picture as this is not a one year problem. Member Callanan reminded the WC that TM does not represent a snap shot of the town.

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- Member Widmer and Chair Curtis discussed the option of taking a “straw vote” of TM at the end of the discussion. Member Brusch added that the WC needs to be discussing override variables: menu/pyramid, etc.

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- ***Warrant Discussion: Articles 28, 31-32, 22***

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- ***Article 28 – Amendment to OBEP Fund Enabling Legislation***

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- The WC previously opposed this Article because the control of the OPEB money rested in the Retirement Board’s hands. Assistant Town administrator Conti noted that the Medicare part D language has been removed.

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- ***Article 22 – Appropriation for VFW Space Agreement Payments***

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- Why is the town paying \$7,500 for the use of the VFW building by the American Legion? Town Administrator Younger said that the American Legion had been in the Homer Building. The \$7,500 came to be when the American Legion was moved to the VFW. Member Brusch said that ample space is now available in the Town Hall complex for the American Legion, and noted that the Town fully accepted its obligation to provide space to the American Legion. The WC then discussed possible spaces that might be made available.

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- Member Hofmann motioned: That the WC oppose spending \$7,500 for the use of the VFW building by the American Legion? The WC unanimously recommends unfavorable action on Article 22.

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- ***Articles 31-32 – Zoning By-Law: Historic Accessory Building Preservation (The Barn By-Law)***

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- The WC agreed that the following questions must be addressed before it can opine on these Articles: how many properties are affected? where are they located? would they be legal under setback restrictions? Chair Curtis will request that information from Ms. Fallon.

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- ***Minutes***

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- The Minutes of 3-25-09 and 4-01-09 will be reviewed at next week's meeting.

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- Member McLaughlin moved that the WC adjourn at 9:36 pm.

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- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio

- WC Recording Secretary